United Nations CEDAW/C/LBR/7-8

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

Distr.: General
10 April 2014

Original: English

Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention

Seventh and eighth periodic reports of States parties due in 2013

Liberia*

[Date received: 17 March 2014]

* The present document is being issued without formal editing.

14-29612 (E) 020514

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Government of Liberia, through the Ministry of Gender and Development acknowledges the tremendous work done by the thematic working groups in the preparation of this Report. The tireless efforts and commitment of representatives of various Ministries and Agencies of Government, who worked assiduously to ensure that this report was completed in time, are commendable.

We are particularly grateful to UNWOMEN, for their guidance and continuous support and our consultants for their insights, leadership and coordination during the report writing process.

The report was written by a consortium of Ministries, and Agencies of Government, Civil society Organizations, National and International Non-governmental organizations. These entities were organized into five thematic groups charged with the responsibilities to review the concluding comments of Liberia's last CEDAW periodic report, citing activities carried out by the Government to implement the articles of CEDAW during the reporting period, collect all relevant data and write the final report.

Three regional consultations on the draft report were held with participants from all of Liberia's fifteen counties. The results of these consultations were incorporated into the final draft of the CEDAW report.

To finalize the report, a National Validation Exercise was held in Monrovia. This brought together stakeholders from the Government Ministries, Agencies, Civil Society Organizations, Women's groups, youths, community and traditional leaders.

This report is the culmination of all of these developments.

We remain forever grateful to all whose contribution made this a reality.

Sincerely,

Julia Duncan-Cassell
Minister of Gender and Development

Acronyms and Abbreviations

ABE	Alternative Basic Education
ACS	American Colonization Society
AFFELL	Association of Female Lawyers of Liberia
AFT	Agenda for Transformation
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ALP	Accelerated Learning Program
ANC	Antenatal Care
ART	Anti-Retro Viral Therapy
BIN	Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization
BLSS	Basic Life Saving Skills
BPHS	Basic Package of Health Services
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CEO	County Education officer
CPSN	Comprehensive Food Security and Nutrition Survey
CRC	Constitution Review Committee
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CRP	Constitution Reform Process
CSOs	Civil Society Organization
CSW	Commission on the status of Women
CWC	Child Welfare Committee
DEO	District Education Officer
DWB	Decent Work Bill
ECD	Early Childhood Development
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EPAG	Economic Empowerment of Adolescent Girls and Young Women
EPHS	Essential Package of Health Services
FAWE	Forum for African Women Educationalists
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment

FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
FPPAL	Family Parent Planning Association of Liberia
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GEWEE	Gender Equality and Women's Economic Empowerment
GFPs	Gender Focal Persons
HIV	Human Immune Virus
INGOS	International Non-Governmental Organizations
LACE	Liberia Agency Community Empowerment
LD	Liberian Dollars
LEAG	Liberia Education Administrative Guides
LEAR	Liberia Education Administrative Regulations
LFS	Labor Force Survey
LISGIS	Liberia Institute for Statistics and Geo-Information Services
LSHS	Liberia Demography and Health Survey
LWLC	Liberian Women Legislative Caucus
MCC	Millennium Challenge Corporation
MCSS	Monrovia Consolidated School System
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOGD	Ministry of Gender and Development
MOH&SW	Ministry of Health and Social Welfare
MOJ	Ministry of Justice
MOL	Ministry of Labor
NASSCORI	National Social Security and Welfare Corporation
NATPAH	National Association on Traditional Practices Affecting Health
NCHE	National Commission on Higher Education
NEPAD	New Partnership for African Development
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NGP	National Gender Policy
PHC	Primary Health Care
PMTCT	Prevention of Mother-To-Child Transmission of HIV

PNC	Post Natal Care
RH	Reproductive Health
RTTI	Rural Teacher Training Institute
SCT	Social Cash Transfer program
SDGEA	Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa
SEA	Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
SGBV	Sexual Gender Based Violence
SGEI	Special Girls' Education Initiative
SMWF	Sirleaf Market Women Fund
TTI	Teacher Training Institute
TVET	Technical Vocational Education Training
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WACP	Women and Children Protection Unit
WFP	World Food Program

I. Preface

Liberia's emerging democracy is in its eighth year since multi-party elections were held in November, 2005. The first post conflict multi-party elections brought to power the incumbent President, Her Excellency, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf who has been re-elected to succeed herself for a second six year term. The most important achievement of this period is the maintenance of peace and security which is crucial to national growth and development. Liberia has transitioned from a state of post conflict reconstruction to socio economic growth and development. Policies and programs initiated to accelerate Liberia's development mainstream gender, more now, than in the past. Additional programs which are women specific have also been initiated and are achieving outstanding results.

Liberian women are marginalized in all sectors and at all levels. Programs targeted to minimize these disparities have been implemented to increase the participation of women and assure their involvement in decision making processes. These range from specialized programs in education to economic empowerment through loan schemes, training and opportunities for employment. Others are empowerment for women's leadership and increased recruitment of women for work in the security sector.

This Report epitomizes the situation of women in Liberia and the commitment of the Government to implement provisions of the CEDAW Convention. Extreme caution has been taken to represent the facts. In instances where there have been some shortcomings in implementation, the report provides an opportunity to highligh. these gaps with a view to providing additional opportunities to renew commitment and take appropriate steps for implementation.

We are aware it is not feasible to meet all of our obligations under the Convention in one reporting cycle, but we renew our commitment to the improvement of the status of women in all sectors and at all levels and the eradication of all forms of discrimination against women. Towards this end, our country is currently undertaking constitutional review, judicial reform, public sector reform, land tenure reform, as well as other measures to ensure gender parity and equity.

II. General Introduction

III. PART TWO: RECOMMENDATIONS/OBSERVATIONS

Article 1 and 2: Policy and Legal Measures to Eliminate discrimination

Measures taken to address the concluding observations are treated extensively in articles covering those observations. However, it is important to note that marked accomplishments have been made in the areas of eliminating discrimination in the work place by the draft Decent Work Bill currently before the Liberian Legislature. Details of this are elaborated on under article 11.

Fundamental Rights and Freedoms under the Constitution

Articles 8 and 11 of the Liberian constitution provides for the fundamental rights of the citizens. The constitution protects and provides fundamental rights and freedoms to all persons, irrespective of ethnic background, race, sex, and creed, place of origin or political affiliation.

The definition of discrimination in accordance with Article 1 of the Convention or provisions on equal rights of women in line with article 2 of the Convention is not yet enshrined in our Constitution. Women in Liberia are developing a strategy to advance proposals on women's issues for consideration during the Constitution Review Process which is currently under way. These include the definition of discrimination, age for marriage and women's rights issues. This process is driven by a combined group inclusive of the Ministry of Gender and Development, CSO's, NGO's and other professional women's groups.

The CEDAW Convention has not been fully domesticated. The Ministry of Gender and Development with the support of UNFPA is in the process of drafting appropriate laws to domesticate various provisions of the Convention. These include Domestic Violence Law which incorporates GBV, Children's rights laws, etc.

POLICY REFORM

A number of policy reforms have been instituted to address the inequality of women and men in all sectors. These are:

- The National Reproductive Health and Commodity Security Strategy and Operational Plan, *2008-2012*
- Poverty Reduction Strategy, 2008-2011
- Agenda for transformation: steps towards vision 2030
- Decent Work Bill, 2013
- Education reform Act of 2011
- Law Reform Commission Act of 2011
- National Gender Policy, 2009
- Rule of Law taskforce
- Compilation of customary laws and revision of the hinterland regulations

ACCESS TO JUSTICE

Women have equal rights to justice under the law. Women's rights under the laws are those basic and fundamental rights as enshrined in the Constitution and the Act that ratifies the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's right which Liberia is a signatory to. Other mechanisms that the government has put into place include:

(a) The establishment of a Women and Children Protection (WACP) unit at the Liberian National Police headquarters and other sub stations to cater to the needs of women and children;

(b) The Sexual and gender-based violence crimes unit, and;

(c) The establishment of criminal court "E" specializing in the prosecution of sexual and gender based violence cases.

On access to Justice, the Committee raised concerns about traditional courts. These are being abolished through directives from the Ministry of Internal affairs to local authorities. Civil law courts have been established in each county. Due to the spatial distribution of the population, women have to travel long distances to get to the courts, but once there, justice is dispensed equally.

Principles of equality with men are enshrined in the Liberian constitution but there are some disparities entrenched in culture, religion and tradition which pose numerous challenges. The government of Liberia has instituted a Constitutional Review Process (CRP). A five man Constitution Review Committee (CRC) was set up in August, 2012 to review the 1986 Constitution and recommend the revisions of all provisions inconsistent with current realities. One of the first activities undertaken by the Committee was to hold a national "women's consultative forum" in April 2013 to solicit the views of women on articles they believe are necessary to be repealed, amended or revised. These views will be subjected to national consultations to ensure they represent the views of all women nationally and are relevant for inclusion in the constitutional review process.

Nationwide consultations are scheduled to be held during the constitutional review period which spans 2013-2016. It is expected that issues of inequality between the sexes will be advanced for inclusion in the new constitution, if they are constitutional issues. If they are not, the recommendations will be forwarded to the requisite government ministry or agency for possible implementation.

The first consultation held was for women under the theme, Liberian Women: "Seizing the Moment for Constitutional Reform". The Forum created a platform for: imparting knowledge on the constitutional review and reform process in Liberia; the review of lessons from other countries on gender-sensitive approaches to constitution making and assessing opportunities and developing strategies and modalities for harnessing women's participation in the ongoing CRP that guarantees women's rights and gender equality in Liberia. An 11 point Resolution was presented to the CRC and the President of Liberia by the participants. The resolutions included:

- Building of an inclusive and participatory process where women participate effectively;
- Enough resources mobilized to support women engagement in the CRP;

- Robust civic education to reach out to all. This includes engagement of women at all levels;
- Getting messages across divergent areas of concern including land, economy, violence, marriage, natural resources and civil education amongst others;
- Update database of women leaders in the counties for active engagement in the process. This would ensure that bona-fide inhabitants of the respective counties particularly women participate as required, to promote continuity;
- Women need to design strategies to follow up and ensure that all issues raised in this forum and other subsequent dialogues and engagement will be reflected in the final document;
- Setting up structures at different levels, starting from grassroots, to engage women in the CRP. Women to organize county groups to mobilize women, discuss CRP and link up with CRC;
- Setting up a desk at CRC to: facilitate discussions with the legislature and other partners with regards to women participation in the CRP. This includes carrying out research and analysis and linking up with women in the counties for information sharing and feedback.

Article 3: Measures to Develop and Advance Women

The Ministry of Gender and Development is established among other things:

- "To advise the government of Liberia on all matters affecting the development and welfare of women and children as well as any matters referred to it by the Government of the Republic of Liberia;
- Coordinate effectively the Government wide gender mainstreaming efforts to ensure the prospective s of both men and women are central to policy formulation, legislations, resource allocation, planning and outcomes of policies and programs, focusing on gender equality, the empowerment of women and development of children;
- Monitor and report on the impact of national policies and programs on women and children as well as recommend appropriate measures to be taken in mobilizing and integrating women as equal partners to men in the economic, social, political and cultural development of the Country."

The Ministry is staffed with 192 persons, 112 of whom are women. The national budget allocates funds for the implementation of the Ministry's mandate. This budgetary allocation is augmented by funds provided by development partners for special programs supportive of women issues. Government budgetary allocation to the Ministry of Gender in fiscal year 2012-2013 was United States dollars, 1,201,013 amounting to 0.178% of the national budget of 672,050,415. This was increased slightly in fiscal year 2013-2014 to $1,214,752 United States dollars representing 0.23% of the national budget of $520,000,000. In spite of the increases in the budget to the Ministry of Gender and development, the funding is not adequate to fully implement all of its programs.

NATIONAL GENDER POLICY

The National Gender Policy of Liberia was adopted in 2009 to address gender inequalities and the marginalization of women in Liberia. The policy seeks to mainstream gender in national development processes, enhance women's and girls' empowerment for sustainable and equitable development and create and strengthen gender responsive structures and mechanisms in which both women and men can participate and benefit from development programs on an equal basis. (National Gender Policy, 2009). The National Gender Policy and the institutionalization of the National Gender forum in Liberia are the stepping stones for creating the enabling environment to restructure gender relations and provide support to facilitate the intended change, build capacities to ensure and manage this change, and set the agenda through a strategic framework. The policy addresses issues of employment, education, access to justice, agriculture, environment, health, human rights, youth, persons with disabilities, people living with HIV and AIDS, Gender Budgeting, governance and the rule of law, etc.

Gender focal persons are in all ministries and agencies of government. There are also gender officers in the counties with the responsibilities to ensure all gender issues in the counties are adequately addressed in keeping with established policies and laws. The Ministry of Gender and Development will strengthen focal points to handle the numerous issues they are confronted with.

Since the last report in 2010, there have been changes in the structure of the Ministry of Gender and Development with the establishment of new Department, Divisions and Units. These are the Human Rights Division charged with the responsibility to coordinate with the Ministry of Justice and other agencies involved with human rights violations. The Children's Unit was changed to a Children's Protection Division with the responsibility to coordinate the activities of all international and national non-governmental and governmental organizations involved with child rights and protection issues.

The Ministry of Gender and Development was able to make achievements in the following areas:

Empowerment of Women

The MOGD conducted awareness campaigns to encourage women to register and vote during the 2011 elections. It also provided moral, financial and material support to female candidates.

The Ministry of Gender, through its Gender Equality and Women's Economic Empowerment Program, established adult literacy classes, Village Savings Loans Associations and the Women in Cross Border Trade Organization to empower rural women in nine (9) counties between 2009-2012. It also provides business development skills to women, particularly rural women, to enable them to manage their businesses better. An association of cross border traders is established for the purpose of information sharing and networking.

The Ministry of Gender and Development established rural women structures in 15 counties in Liberia in 2009. The structures provide the opportunities for women to articulate their concerns, evaluate their accomplishments and devise ways to tackle challenges. They meet regularly in leadership forums and hold an annual conference to chart future activities.

Through the instrumentality of the Ministry of Gender and Development, the New Partnership for African Development, NEPAD Project and Colloquium loans program provided micro loans to 6,500 less privileged and vulnerable women.

The Government of Liberia in partnership with the Indian Government trained eight (8) rural women from four (4) Counties (Bassa, Cape Mount, Lofa and Rural Montserrado) in solar energy production to link rural women to the energy sector. As a result of these programs, women have access to electricity to support adult literacy programs. As a result of the pilot program, electrification of rural communities will be extended.

Under the Economic Empowerment of adolescent girls and young women (EPAG) Project in 2009-2011, 2500 girls and young women, ages 16 to 24 years old, were trained in job, business development and life skills and employed after the training. Loan schemes which benefited 3000 women were established.

Food security and nutrition

The MOGD trained 160 women in post-harvest processing, par-boiling, drying and milling of rice in 2010 and distributed seeds and tools to women in 15 counties and establishment of seed banks in 12 counties.

IMPLEMENTATION OF CEDAW

After the submission of the State party report in 2009, a CEDAW implementation task force and five thematic working groups were established to collect and collate data and information on the progress made on the implementation of the recommendations of the CEDAW Committee. The taskforce comprises representatives from various government Ministries and Agencies which meets regularly to report on implementation. Currently, monitoring is being addressed by periodic meetings of the sector ministries and agencies which report regularly.

Gender has been mainstreamed in the Poverty Reduction Strategy of Government and the current Agenda for Transformation which sets policy direction for the country up to 2030. Specific gender issues in the policy include mainstreaming cross cutting issues across all sectors for society's overall productivity and well-being, with particular emphasis on the vulnerable segment of the country's population such as women, children, people with disabilities and Youth. The ATF emphasizes:

- **GENDER EQUALITY:** Improve the socio-economic and political status and capacity of women in Liberia.
- **CHILD PROTECTION:** Ensure the protection of children's rights; shield them from the effects of vulnerability and discrimination; and provide a safe environment where they can realize their full potential.
- **DISABILITY:** Improve access to equitable social, political, and economic opportunities and provide full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for PWD.
- **YOUTH EMPOWERMENT:** To empower young people as full participants in all aspects of Liberian society.

BEIJING PLATFORM FOR ACTION

Liberia took action to address the Beijing Platform for action by establishing taskforces to deal with the 12 critical areas under the Beijing platform. The MOGD coordinates the implementation of the Beijing Platform of action with the relevant government Ministries and agencies.

Security Sector

On the security sector, the National Security Policy seeks to increase public confidence in the security forces through the recruitment of qualified security personnel via transparent and equitable vetting processes to reflect Liberia's diverse ethnic, gender and religious representation and train personnel in line with international standards, promoting accountability, ethical behavior and professional conduct under democratic civilian control.

Actions and programs are designed to attract more women into the Security sector. This includes reducing the criteria for recruitment to encourage particularly women into the police force. More women have been recruited but the numbers are still too low. For example, of the entire enlistment into the Armed Forces of Liberia, women account for about only 2%. Accordingly, the Women and Child Protection Units of the National Police are being expanded and strengthened. WAC units exist in all counties but in most instances are understaffed. For example, in River Gee there is only one police station and one trained officer.

Agriculture

The Agenda for Transformation, Liberia's eighteen year national plan, expects to increase the number of viable community and private-sector forestry enterprises, forest production exports, value-added and employment, including those of youth, women and other vulnerable groups as confirmed by the timber chain-of-custody. The timber chain of custody provides that the community has custody of the forest resources which is harvested by investors or community leaders. This has to be done for the benefit of all concerned, taking into consideration the impact on the environment. This way, natural resources in a community will be for the benefit of all, particularly women who work the land.

Article 4: Measures to accelerate Equality

Various measures were taken during the reporting period to address issues of equality of women with men. Some of these include removal of discriminatory customary and traditional laws, access to improved health care and specialized education programs. Details of the programs and measures are addressed at length in the specific articles of this report.

Article 5: Sex Roles and stereotyping

The government of Liberia has carried out massive awareness nationwide on the role of women and men in the society. Through the help of partners, programs have been developed in building adolescent girls' and young women's capacity in technical fields such as masonry, carpentry, electricity, painting, driving heavy duty vehicles, etc.

Traditional Practices

Since the last CEDAW report in 2009, the Government of Liberia has taken concrete steps to abolish the issuance of permits to traditional leaders and Zoes of the 15 counties, through the Ministry of Internal Affairs, to curtail harmful customary and traditional practices that affect the well-being of women and girls. In November 2010, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the traditional leaders and Zoes agreed that all Sande bushes or bush schools be located 25 miles away from the community, and no child should be forcefully initiated or taken from formal school to be initiated.

Only persons 18 years or above can consent to join the Sande society and be initiated. This is also backed by the Children's Law passed in 2011 which states that "any unnecessary or uncultured practice that may inflict physical, psychosocial or emotional pain to the child or otherwise violates or endanger her or his bodily integrity, life, health, dignity, education, welfare or holistic development is punishable" (Article 6 Section 4d). This has increased the number of girl children in school and has the potential to lower the rate of FGM because fewer girls are conscripted to sande schools where FGM is prevalent.

On January 15, 2013, the Ministry of Internal Affairs issued Circular 12 which states specifically that "a person who uses any form of force or intimidation to compel another person to yield to, or be initiated into, any tribal ritual or traditional practice ... could be arrested, charged and prosecuted for violation of civil and human rights in Liberia." Appropriate awareness has been carried out by the traditional leaders and authorities from the Government of Liberia to ensure the full implementation of this policy. Reports indicate that there is a reduction in traditional practices harmful to women in the rural areas as a result of these policies and the strategies adopted for public education and awareness.

Violence against Women

A Gender Based Violence Action Plan to prevent and respond to GBV cases in Liberia has been developed. The plan includes the establishment of "Safe Homes" for SGBV survivors in 7 counties. Six of these safe homes are functional in Bassa, Bong, Lofa, Cape Mount, Margibi and Nimba counties, while the remaining one in River Gee is expected to be completed and functional. These Safe Homes provide temporary protective shelters for abused women and children as well as psychosocial counseling, recreation and follow-up treatment for survivals of rape. Additionally, trainings have been conducted for security and medical personnel to respond to SGBV cases with sensitivity; taking the rights, health needs, interest and privacy of the victims into consideration.

In addition, the Association of Female Lawyers (AFELL) and the National Bar Association have established legal clinics where women can get free legal aid. These services are free of charge to women and victims of sexual violence. AFELL opened a sub office in Bomi County in May, 2013 as a first step to decentralize their services to other parts of Liberia.

The MOGD and some state institutions and international non-governmental organizations such as Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, the UN System, Medical Mondiale, Equip Liberia, Touching Humanity in Need of Kindness (THINK), Women Aid Incorporated, and Norwegian Refugee Council provide services to survivors of sexual violence, including safe homes protection, legal, medical and psychological support.

CREATING AWARENESS ON WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS

The Ministry of Gender and Development, NGOs and the UN system have undertaken numerous awareness-raising and sensitization campaigns to change negative perceptions of women in the society. These campaigns deal with mitigating violence against women, portrayal of women as sex objects and discrimination against women. The simplified rape and inheritance laws are used to raise awareness, educate and inform the public on the prevention and response to rape as well as women's rights under the inheritance Law. Radio dramas, talk shows, and spot messages are used to educate the public to stop all forms of violence against women, including domestic violence which currently has no specific law dealing with it.

Development of a Domestic Violence Law for Liberia

Liberia has drafted a Domestic Violence Law with inputs incorporated from both urban and rural Liberia. The enactment of this Law will assist greatly in addressing violence against women and children and ensure maximum protection of their rights in the domestic setting. The draft Domestic Violence Law is in response to paragraph 23 of the concluding observations of the CEDAW Committee, which calls on the Government of Liberia to develop and implement a comprehensive legal framework that will address violence against women and children.

Article 6: Trafficking and Exploitation

The Government of Liberia is making significant efforts to fully comply with minimum standards for eliminating human trafficking in Liberia. The Liberian government defines human trafficking as the "recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a person by means of the threat or use of force or other means of coercion, by abduction, fraud, deception, abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability, or by the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person for the purpose of exploitation:" Human trafficking takes numerous forms, rural to urban and vice versa as well as trafficking of persons from other countries to Liberia.

A National Anti-Human Trafficking Task Force has been established to combat trafficking in persons. The Task Force works through a National Anti-Human Trafficking Secretariat and comprises members from all security agencies in Liberia. The task force is responsible to conduct investigations on human trafficking and link cases with the National Police and Courts.

Government put into place new policies to protect children in welfare institutions by revising guidelines for accreditation to providers for quality and alternative child care. The Bureau of Immigration implements the parental travel authority for minors traveling abroad. This is processed by the Ministry of Health & Social Welfare. A moratorium is placed on child adoption in Liberia since this is one of the conduits through which children are externally trafficked.

The Government of Liberia and UNICEF undertook nation-wide research on human trafficking in Liberia in 2011 which revealed that most of the victims of trafficking are children and girls who are used for street hawking, prostitution and domestic work. Liberia's efforts at combating human trafficking are buttressed by public

education on the dangers of human trafficking. Over thirty training sessions on anti-human trafficking prevention were held for personnel of the security sector and communities along Liberia's borders with other countries. The TIP Secretariat also trained twelve (12) village parent groups nation-wide to serve as watch dogs for human rights abuses in rural communities. No impact evaluation has been conducted on this community monitoring. However, it is anticipated that the training will assist in reducing the levels of human trafficking.

In enhancing collaboration with West African and other countries to combat human trafficking, Liberia's National Action Plan on trafficking is fully implemented in concert with ECOWAS' Response Action plan on combating trafficking. This plan and its activities are reviewed annually.

Liberia has also ratified and is implementing the following Conventions:

- Conventions on Mutual Assistance in Legal Matters, by the Economic Community of West African States;
- Protocol Against the smuggling of migrants by Land, Air and Sea, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime;
- UN Convention on Transnational Organized Crime;
- ECOWAS Convention on Extradition, and Protocol to prevent and suppress trafficking in persons, especially women and children.

Several cases of human trafficking were recorded during the reporting period, 2009-2013. Between 2009 and 2010, 45 persons, ages 18-44, were trafficked to Liberia. These were 37 Bangladeshi, 7 Moroccans and 1 Tunisian. Of this number 7 were females and 38 males. The Government of Liberia successfully repatriated the victims and one perpetrator was convicted. The TIP recorded 6 cases of 111 persons trafficked out of Liberia during the same period. Of the 111 persons trafficked out of Liberia, 14 were females, 37 males and 60 children.

Internally, 15 rural to urban human trafficking cases were recorded which involved 11 girls and 4 boys. The BIN also recorded 6 cases of urban to rural human trafficking which involved 5 girls and one boy, with ages ranging from 14-19 years. Most of the victims were re-united with their families and perpetrators charged and prosecuted. Internally, trafficking of girls to various parts of Liberia to work in the sex industry requires additional attention by the TIP.

Article 7 & 8: Promotion of Equality in Political Decision Making

The Fairness Bill to foster and promote equality in political decisions making has lingered in the Legislature for the past four years. Strategies adopted in the past to pass the bill were reviewed to determine pitfalls leading to the non-passage of the bill. It was determined that approaches were generally abrasive and confrontational. New strategies have been developed to lobby male legislators. Study tours to countries successful in electing more than 40 percent women in parliament were undertaken to serve as guide for the promotion and passage of the fairness Bill. The Fairness Bill is to set aside 30% quota for women which the overwhelming majority of men in the legislature consider undemocratic.

The proposal to amend section 4.5 of the Elections Law of Liberia to include gender equity in nomination of candidates states: "candidate listing for elected offices shall contain no less than 30% and no more than 70% of any gender." Working in concert with the Gender Office of the National Elections Commission, the new electoral law is another strategy to increase women's participation in the electoral process. The proposed amendment to the electoral law is also sponsored by the Liberian Women Legislative Caucus, LWLC, initial sponsor of the Fairness Bill.

Women are supporting the bill by lobbying their representatives for its passage. They also participated in legislative public hearings on the proposed bill. Already some male members of the legislature have expressed public support for the new electoral law by pronouncements on national radio. A parallel strategy to get more support for the Bill is to get President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf to announce her support for the new electoral law publicly.

In the 2011 elections, one hundred and two (102) women participated in the process. These included three women presidential candidates. Though only twelve (12) women were elected (eight Representatives and four Senators), the elections marked an improvement in the number of women contesting political offices. It did, however, register a reduction from 14% to 12% of the number of women elected to serve in the Legislature. Currently, the figure has been increased to 13 women with an additional woman winning in a by-election. Women now constitute 30% of cabinet ministers appointed by the President while two of five Associate Justices on the Supreme Court are women.

Six out of Liberia's 17 substantive ambassadors are women. Liberia is also represented by women ambassadors and high ranking Foreign Service officers in many countries throughout the world such as South Africa, Ethiopia, Guinea, Japan, Great Britain, Sierra Leone, Uganda, etc. Women also represent Liberia as full ambassadors to international organizations like the United Nations and African Union. The Government of Liberia is constantly represented by various Civil Society Organizations, Rural Women and Line Ministries and Agencies at international organizations, the most recent being participation in Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) conference held in New York, USA, in March 2013.

A series of activities have been held to raise awareness on the importance of women's political participation. These include the holding of a day's consultative forum with the members of the Liberian Legislature on women's participation in decision making on the theme: "GENDER PARITY MEASURES IN DECISION MAKING POSITIONS IN LIBERIA". Other stakeholders' workshops and seminars, national programs on women's issues, press articles, radio talk shows and outdoor advertising, printed materials and publication of key messages have been undertaken.

Other awareness-raising activities include, among others:

- Annual celebration of International Women's Day
- Annual campaign of 16 days of activism against Gender based violence
- Anti-rape campaign
- Rural women's conferences
- National women's conferences'
- Establishment of a Secretariat on Gender Based Violence

Considerable strides have been made in getting women in key decision making positions. Where possible, women have been appointed to positions of trust and have performed credibly in these areas. A major area of challenge is getting women elected to the legislature. Various women organizations and women rights advocates are undertaking programs to prepare and train women for leadership and are helping them to devise strategies to contest elections. To date, a profile of women in key decision making positions are as follows:

WOMEN IN DECISION MAKING POSITIONS

- President and Head of State is a woman
- Of 21 cabinet ministers 15 are males and 6 females (appointed positions)
- Of 318 civil service directors, 52 are women and 266 are men (appointed Positions)
- 5 out or 15 county superintendents are women (appointed positions)
- Security sector ... immigration 20% of the force are women
- Security sector ... police 14.6% are women
- Security sector ... Armed Forces of Liberia 4.7% are women
- 2 out of 5 supreme court justices are women (appointed positions)
- In the legislature 13 of 108 law makers are women and 95 are men (elected positions)

Numerous other women are employed as heads in state run autonomous agencies as Directors and managers. These include the Port Authority, NPA, the Liberia Refuge Repatriation and Resettlement Commission, LRRRC and the National Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization.

Article 9: Nationality

Article 27 of the Liberian constitution provides that

(a) "all persons who, on the coming into force of this constitution were lawfully citizens of Liberia shall continue to be Liberian citizens.

(b) In order to preserve, foster and maintain the positive Liberian culture, values and character, only persons who are Negroes or of Negro descent shall qualify by birth or by naturalization to be citizens of Liberia.

(c) The legislature shall, adhering to the above standard, prescribe such other qualification criteria for the procedures by which naturalization may be obtained.

Article 28 states:

1. any person, at least one of whose parents was a citizen of Liberia at the time of the person's birth, shall be a citizen of Liberia; provided that any such person shall upon reaching maturity renounce any other citizenship acquired by virtue of one parent being a citizen of another country.

2. No citizen of the Republic shall be deprived of citizenship or nationality except as provided by law; and no person shall be denied the right to change citizenship or nationality.

Efforts have been made through the Constitution Review Process to address all disparities, particularly as they relate to children born to Liberian mothers with foreign fathers outside of Liberia. This is to harmonize the nationality law with the constitution for all children born of one foreign parent, irrespective of the sex.

Women have equal rights to change or retain their nationalities which are in no way affected by their marriages. Liberian women married to foreign men are not compelled to adopt the nationalities of their spouses. The same holds true for women of other nationalities married to Liberian men. Change of one's nationality is a matter of individual choice.

Article 10: Equality in Access to Education

The Liberian Government has made considerable efforts and series of interventions in addressing the issues highlighted in the recommendations on education as stated in articles 4 and 10 of the Convention. Education is one of the primary methods to lift a population out of poverty towards prosperity and stability. Creating more effective policies to increase education for girls add significantly to our human capital.

The Liberian Education Administration and Management Policies outlined in the Education Reform Act of 2011 addresses policies on Girls Education, Special Education, School Grants, Scholarships, amongst other things. The Education Reform Act of 2011 was approved on August 8, 2011. It replaces the Education law of 2001, approved January 8, 2002.

The Education Reform Act of 2011 continues to further build on the premises made in the Girls' Education Policy of 2006 and aims at:

a) Free and compulsory education for all students of primary school nationally.

b) Recruiting and training more female teachers;

c) Providing counseling in schools for girls.

d) Ensuring and effecting appropriate sanctions against teachers who commit sexual abuse and assault of students

e) Offering life skills at school to raise the self-esteem of girls so they can say no to sexual abuse; and

f) Increasing the availability of school scholarships for girls.

The Policy on Girls' Education, developed in 2006, was revised in 2013 to take into consideration present realities; and to align with the new Education Reform Act which advances girls' education at the regional, national, and local levels with workable strategies and interventions. These interventions are:

- Special Education Policies to address the disparities between persons with disabilities and persons without disabilities in the educational system including girls with disabilities.

- Accelerated Learning Program, ALP, which protects children's right to education ensures access to quality education. It was developed to reach over-aged and out-of-school children and youth. This is particularly useful for school dropouts.

Chapter 2 of the Girl's Education Policy states that the Central Government and local authorities shall implement all provisions stipulated in the Girls' education Policy to address social and cultural barriers to Girls' Education as a means to empower girls and women.

Chapter 3 of the National Policy on Girls' Education: Improving Girls' and Women's Access to Vocational Training, Science, and Technology, and Continuing Education stresses the development and implementation of education, training and retraining policies for women, especially young women and women re-entering the labor market, to provide skills to meet the needs of a changing socio-economic context for improving their employment opportunities.

On Protection from gender-based violence the policy stipulates that the Ministries of Education and Gender & Development shall work closely with the Ministry of Justice to ensure victims of sexual violence in educational institutions get speedy redress in a court of competent jurisdiction. Policies on sexual harassment and abuse of girls in schools need to be enforced, particularly, in rural areas where there is a lack of adequate monitoring to enforce compliance. A lack of awareness of these policies and their ramifications allow for compromising which reduces the retention of girls in schools. The Ministry of Education through its Girls Education Unit is raising awareness, educating students and local authorities to document and report all such cases to the Ministry of Education for investigation and prosecution.

Dropout rates are almost equal for boys and girls from primary to secondary schools. According to the School census report of 2011, of the 39,405 students who dropped out of school, 19,842 were girls. At the junior High level, 4,462 dropouts from the total of 8,868 were girls, while 1,714 of a total of 3,566 secondary school dropouts were girls. The dropout rate for females is high due to teenage pregnancies, early marriages, and vulnerability of girls to adverse socio economic situations. This situation is being handled through different programs aimed at retaining girls in schools.

A number of Teacher Training Institutions have been rehabilitated, staffed and equipped to provide basic teacher training for elementary schools in Liberia. Free tertiary education and stipends are provided by the Government for all students specializing in education as incentives to increase the number of trained teachers in the country. This policy went into effect in 2011.

There is no discrimination against women in all forms of education as a matter of national policy. More schools are being constructed to accommodate the ever growing number of school age children in both urban and rural areas. But impediments such as lack of trained teachers and technical schools in rural areas reduce the opportunities for most students. Current statistics (2011-2012) from these technical and vocational training institutions indicates that girls make up over 30% of the graduates.

Summary of graduates of Public Technical Vocation Education Training (TVET) Institutions from 2011-2012:

No.	*Institution*	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*
1.	Booker Washington institution	200	98	298
2.	Harbel Multilateral High School	197	103	300
3.	William V.S. Tubman High School	90	11	101
4.	Maryann Chessman Home Arts/Cosmetology (AVTP)	0	55	55
5.	Maryann Chessman School of home Arts National Beauty School of Cosmetology	0	56	56
6.	LSVTC	31	20	51
7.	Voinjama Multilateral High School	214	74	288
8.	Sinoe Multilateral High School	125	75	200
9.	**Grand Total**	**857**	**492**	**1 349**

Source: *Education statistics for the Republic of Liberia, MOE, 2012*

Sex disparities in the educational system are being addressed by the encouragement of more females to enter the teaching profession. The number of female teachers in the educational system is currently lower than males at both the primary and secondary levels. This is a disincentive to girls to pursue studies in certain areas, particularly the natural sciences, and pose hindrances to addressing issues of sexual exploitation and abuse in the sector.

Primary School Enrollment by County and Gender

	Enrollment				
County	*Female*	*Males*	*Total*	*% of females*	*% of Male*
Bomi	5 573	6 318	11 891	46.9	53.1
Bong	31 915	38 652	70 567	45.2	54.8
Gbarpolu	7 180	9 530	16 710	43.0	57.0
Grand Bassa	13 722	17 756	31 478	43.6	56.4
Grand Cape Mount	6 167	6 973	13 140	46.9	53.1
Grand Gedeh	9 239	10 950	20 189	45.8	54.2
Grand Kru	7 623	10 198	17 821	42.8	57.2
Lofa	24 594	29 636	54 230	45.4	54.6
Margibi	21 128	22 414	43 542	48.5	51.5
Maryland	11 157	13 172	24 329	45.9	54.1
Montserrado	112 859	110 487	223 346	50.5	49.5
Nimba	47 838	59 360	107 198	44.6	55.4
Rivercess	5 107	6 611	11 718	43.6	56.4
River Gee	5 300	6 921	12 221	43.4	56.6
Sinoe	7 043	9 111	16 154	43.6	56.4
Total	**316 445**	**358 089**	**674 534**	**46.9**	**53.1**

Source: *Education statistics for the Republic of Liberia, MOE, 2012*

Female enrollment in primary schools in Liberia is encouraging. According to the national School Census of 2011 above, there were 674,534 students in primary schools in Liberia out of which 316,445 were girls, accounting for 46.9% of the total primary enrollment. Female primary enrollment per counties shows Montserrado County to record 50.5% enrollment rate of girls of as compare to 49.5% boys. At the junior high school level a total of 138,029 students were enrolled with girls totaling 61,612 or 45%.

Enrollment for secondary schools records 782,049 students for the same period with girls constituting 328,460 or 42%. The percentage change in enrollment from 2008/2009 to 2010/2011 school year was increased by 25.5% with the girl's increment being 27.6% (MOE, 2011).

A vulnerable girls program implemented by the MOGD provides 200 scholarships for vulnerable girls between the ages of 12 to 16 to attend boarding schools. The girls are from ten counties, namely Lofa, Bong, Nimba, Grand Bassa, Cape Mount, Gbarpolu, Bomi, Rural Montserrado and Margibi. The Government has also established junior colleges in the counties to meet the demand for higher education. However, there is a need for more technical schools for students who cannot enroll in junior colleges. Enrollment in tertiary education amounts to 6.4% of total school enrollment. (AFT, 2012) In tertiary institutions the number of female students enrolled in technical areas of studies is increasing but they constitute less than 10%.

Number and % of public secondary school teachers by county and gender

County	*Total*	*Count of males*	*% Male*	*Count of females*	*% Female*
Bomi	62	61	98.4%	1	1.6%
Bong	313	303	96.8%	10	3.2%
Gbarpolu	39	38	97.4%	1	2.6%
Grand Bassa	78	75	96.2%	3	3.8%
Grand Cape Mount	69	63	91.3%	6	8.7%
Grand Gedeh	195	181	92.8%	14	7.2%
Grand Kru	142	140	98.6%	2	1.4%
Lofa	308	300	97.4%	8	2.6%
Margibi	34	33	97.1%	1	2.9%
Maryland	139	132	95.0%	7	5.0%
Mont.	221	197	89.1%	24	10.9%
Nimba	517	491	95.0%	26	5.0%
Rivercess	33	33	100%	0	0.0%
River Gee	47	45	95.7%	2	4.3%
Sinoe	97	96	99.0%	1	1.0%

Source: *Education statistics for the Republic of Liberia, MOE, 2012*

Special vocational and skill training programs for girls in rural areas are still stereotyped, emphasizing skills in tailoring, soap making and tie-dying.

There is uniformity of curricula and national exams for all Liberian schools. Curricula had been revised, validated, and distributed to all schools in Liberia.

Efforts are made to eliminate any stereotype of women and men roles in textbooks and teaching materials.

Boys and girls benefit equally from scholarships, however, there are some scholarships targeted only to girls to increase girls education in natural Science and Education where there are gender gaps. This pertains mainly for students in the urban areas. Students in the rural areas rarely benefit from scholarship programs due to a lack of information on the availability of these scholarships which are generally publicized in the capitol. The Ministry of Education gives scholarships at the secondary and tertiary levels. Special scholarships for girls awarded through the Ministry of Gender and Development totaled 190.

The Government of Liberia through the Girls education section of the Ministry of Education provided scholarships for girls in the following areas.

1. Science and technology
2. Medicine
3. Engineering
4. Education

Over all statistics for the number of female beneficiaries from these special programs are resident in different agencies, non-governmental and governmental organizations catering to women. Overall scholarships awarded in three categories for the year 2013 are as follows:

Category	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*
Secondary	181	118	73
Junior College	296	87	209
University	4 143	2 797	1 345

Source: *Scholarship Div. Ministry of Education. 2013*

The overall literacy rate for Liberia is 56% and males have a higher rate of 66% than females 44%. A literacy rate for 15 to 24 years is 69% with males recording the highest rate 69% than females at 31% (LISGIS July, 2011).

The Ministry of Education, in its decentralization process, established the National Council of Adult Education headed by the Department of Continuing Education at the University of Liberia. Night schools are also established in five of Liberia's 15 counties to further the education of school dropouts, particularly pregnant girls and elderly women. This program has not been rolled out to all counties due to challenges of electricity.

The Alternative Basic Education (ABE) is a non-formal education program which targets overage youth and adults of both sexes who have not attended school. ABE was adopted in 2011 to provide educational opportunities for youth and adults aged 15 to 35. It provides primary education in three levels: level one, Kindergarten to grade two, level two, grades three and four and level three, grades five and six. The program incorporates family planning, HIV and AIDS, computer and livelihoods in its curriculum.

Special Girls' Education Initiative (SGEI) is a night school program designed for pregnant teenage girls, dropouts and mothers. SGEI is currently implemented in two of Liberia's fifteen counties, Lofa and Bomi. Impediments such as a lack of electricity, funds and adequate trained teachers hinder expansion of the program into other counties. This program is separated from the Alternative Basic Education Program mentioned in the preceding paragraph.

All schools within Liberia have sports programs which are mandatory for all students, irrespective of gender.

MOE School Health in collaboration with Family Planning Association of Liberia, FPAL, carries out awareness at high school level on the proper use of contraceptives (male condom, female condom, lo-femenal, microlut and microgyron, etc.). Family planning services are available to students through referral to nearby clinics within that school community. Family planning, teenage pregnancy, drug and substance abuse are infused into the instruction of science and biology courses.

Article 11: Employment

The proposed new Labour Law of Liberia, dubbed the Decent Work Bill passed by the House of Representatives on July 7th, 2013 did not receive the House of Senate endorsement and consequently the passage of the bill has stalled. The two houses of the National Legislature did not agree on the daily minimum wage of $5.60 per day. The proposed bill provides that the "Republic shall direct its policies towards ensuring for all its citizens, without discrimination, opportunity for employment and livelihood, just and humane condition and towards promoting safety, health and welfare facilities".

The law provides in article (a) and (b) that "All women and men are entitled, without distinction, exclusion or preference to enjoy and to exercise the rights and protections provided for in this act. Without limiting the scope of the preceding provisions, all persons who work or seek to work in Liberia are entitled to enjoy and to exercise the rights and protections conferred by the act irrespective of:

i. Race, tribe, indigenous group, language, color, descent, nationality, social or ethnic extraction or origin, economic status, community or occupation;

ii. Immigrant or temporary resident status;

iii. Sex, gender or sexual orientation;

iv. Marital status or family responsibility;

v. Previous, current or future pregnancy or breast feeding;

vi. Health status including HIV or AIDS status whether actual or perceive.

The new Decent Work Bill succeeds the old labor law and makes improvements over it. The new decent work bill provides protection for pregnant and breast feeding women, a provision not included in the old labor laws. Additionally, maternity leave has been increased from twelve weeks as contained in the old labor laws to fourteen paid weeks. At the end of maternity leave an employed woman is entitled to resume her employment on the same terms and conditions of employment as before her maternity leave and an employee who is nursing shall not be required to perform work that is hazardous to her health or to the health of her child.

A network of child care facilities does not exist in Liberia. However, child care is normally done through paid nurse maids, extended family relations or hired nannies that provide child care to enable parents to combine family obligations with work responsibilities and participate in public life.

The Decent Work Bill also provides that women and men are entitled, without distinction, exclusion or preference to receive equal remuneration for work of equal or comparable value. It defines equal remuneration as rates of remuneration established without discrimination based on sex and entitles every employee to be paid no less than the rate fixed in a minimum wage order for the work that the employee is employed to perform. In addition to this, the bill sets a minimum wage for all domestic workers to ensure that they are paid a salary which provides for their needs. This will ensure that women who constitute the majority of domestic workers are assured the right remuneration for their work. Prior to the drafting of this bill, wages for domestic workers were unregulated.

Social security benefits are paid to Government employees on retirement and in cases of invalidity. These social security schemes regarding retirement, incapacity and old age benefits are equally applicable to men and women in government employ. A national scheme to cover employees in the private and informal sectors has not been developed. However, Liberia is endeavoring to rectify this through its vision 2030 agenda which seeks to equalize salaries and benefits for employees in both sectors. Currently Liberia does not have a comprehensive program to address care for the elderly. But most elderly persons are cared for within the family, a system inherent in the culture and tradition of Liberians.

Employment opportunities

According to the 2010 Labor Force Survey Report (LISGIS 2010), the unemployment rate in Liberia stands at 3.7%, vulnerable employment 79% and informal employment 68%. In Liberia, women play a key and pivotal role in the economy, its labor force, and contribute immensely to the household income generation. Yet women and men are not equally distributed across the productive sectors, nor are they equally remunerated. In an economy that is heavily dominated by agriculture and informal work, women carry the heaviest burden in these areas and women laborers, across the board are less likely to be paid for their work.

In Liberia, the employed population and particularly those aged 15 and over, are distributed by three key variables: Sex, age, and locality. The employed population aged 15 and over totals about 1.1 million persons. There are about equal numbers of males and females who are employed. In the table below, of the 484,000 employed persons in the urban areas, there are more men employed (244,000) as compared to women (240,000). However, the situation is a bit different in the rural areas, since the bulk of the employment is in the agriculture sector. Of the 607,000 employed persons in agriculture, women account for the highest number (305,000) as compared to men who number 302,000.

Informal Employment

There are almost three-quarters of a million people engaged in informal employment which accounts for 68 percent of all employment in Liberia. There are more women than men in the informal employment which is more common in rural areas, where 75 percent of all rural employment is informal.

Paid employees in Liberia number 195,000 with two thirds of them working in urban areas. Of this number 79% are considered to be in vulnerable employment. Women account for 89% of vulnerable workers particularly in agriculture and wholesale and retail trade.

Gender Breakdown of Labor by Sector (LFS 2010)

	Number in informal Employment			*Percent of total in formal Employment*		
Sector in Economic Activity	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*
Agriculture, Forestry & Fishery	200 000	209 000	409 000	48.9	51.1	100%
Mining & Quarry	7 000	3 000	10 000	70.0	30.0	100%
Manufacturing	27 000	16 000	43 000	62.8	37.2	100%
Construction	13 000	3 000	16 000	81.3	18.7	100%
Human Health	1 000	2 000	3 000	33.3	66.7	100%
Wholesale/Retail Trade	2 000	4 000	6 000	33.3	66.7	100%
Other Services	53 000	148 000	201 000	26.4	73.6	100%

Employment by Sex, Locality and Main Occupation (LFS 2010)

The table below depicts employment by sex, locality and main occupation. The report reveals that there are more men in managerial positions in both the urban and rural areas compared to women. However, women employment in skilled agriculture work in the urban areas is almost equal to men but the gap widens in the rural areas. Women's employment in the unskilled occupations is almost two times men's employment in the urban areas. This situation is quite different in the rural areas. The employment of females in unskilled work is almost the same as the men in the rural areas.

	Urban			*Rural*			*Total*		
Occupation	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*
Managers	7 000	1 000	8 000	3 000	1 000	4 000	11 000	3 000	14 000
Professionals	29 000	19 000	48 000	14 000	7 000	21 000	43 000	26 000	69 000
Skilled Agriculture Workers	30 000	29 000	59 000	186 000	172 000	358 000	216 000	201 000	417 000
Basic and unskilled works	28 000	51 000	79 000	55 000	59 000	115 000	83 000	110 000	193 000
Technical/Associate Professors	11 000	4 000	15 000	3 000	2 000	5 000	14 000	5 000	19 000

Employment Policies and Strategies

The Government of Liberia and the private sector are ensuring that equal job opportunities for both men and women are provided in the labour market. Employment records have indicated to government that some private as well as public entities have not given equal job opportunities to females as males based on competency and professionalism.

In rural Liberia, the situation varies for women's employment. Patriarchal tendencies inherent in our culture continue to lower women's self-esteem and hinder them from exerting themselves in the job market, even when qualified to fill positions. Traditional sex roles hinder women from vying for elected positions at the local government levels and jobs in security sector.

Eliminating Child Labor

The Government of Liberia has promulgated an Act to eliminate the worse forms of child labour in Liberia in 2008 and in 2011 enacted the Children's Law. The Children's Law provides that no person shall employ a child in work inappropriate for their age or that may be hazardous to the child's health, education, emotional or physical development. This is applied to work undertaken by children regardless of whether the work is under a contractual relationship or for pay and reward.

Article 12: ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

Support to health care service delivery is more heavily prioritized by the government of Liberia now as compared to 2009 when it was heavily dependent on donor-funded vertical programs. Moreover, the national government budgetary allocations to the health sector increased over the past three years from 39.8 million in 2010-2011 to 54.9 million in 2012-2013. (MOH&SW 2012 Annual Report).

CONSTITUTIONAL GUARANTEES, NATIONAL POLICIES AND PROGRAMS FOR HEALTH

Access to health is a basic human right enshrined in the constitution of Liberia. Health is a precondition for individual and societal development. Recognizing the value of health, the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare (MOH&SW) has devoted itself to ensuring that every Liberian has access to health and social welfare services regardless of economic status, origin, religion, gender or geographic location. To ensure access to health care, the Government of Liberia developed a 10 year National Health and Social Welfare Plan (2011-2021) to respond to health care at primary, secondary and tertiary levels. The goal of the Health and Social Welfare Policy of Liberia is to improve the health status of the increasing number of citizens, on an equal basis, through expanded access to effective basic health care, backed by adequate referral services and resources from short to long term.

Liberia operates a three-tier system of health delivery services, primary, secondary and tertiary, with the first and second acting as gate-keeper for the next level. The Government of Liberia is committed to ensuring equity and quality healthcare through the delivery of the Essential Package of Health Services (EPHS). Essential preventive and curative care services are provided at each level of the health system — from the community to referral hospitals. The EPHS focuses on eleven priorities: maternal and new born care, maternal and child health services (including child nutrition), community health, adolescent health services, communicable disease control (including HIV and AIDS), mental health, school health, prison health services, sexual and gender-based violence, emergency services, and non-communicable diseases.

SOME GENERAL HEALTH INDICATORS

Life expectancy is generally 46 years; 38 years for male and 41 for female (LDHS, 2007). Several key health indicators have improved since 2009. These include health facility utilization in Liberia which is gauged by Primary Health Care (PHC) head count and the number of curative consultations. In 2012, 82% of 656 functional health facilities in the country reported 4,981,322 visits as compared to 76% of 422 functional health facilities reporting 3,879,958 in 2010. Data representing the number of visits are not disaggregated by sex.

Maternal Mortality

Liberia has a high maternal mortality rate attributed to direct post-partum hemorrhage, obstructed or prolonged labor, complications of unsafe abortion, eclampsia, malaria and anemia (MOHSW Annual report, 2010 & 2012). However, initial figures show a steady decline due to improved health care delivery since the last report. Maternal mortality rate in Liberia shows a downward trend from 994 per 100,000 births in 2010 to 770 per 100,000 births in 2012. Access to skilled maternal care including delivery has increased in Liberia. Institutional deliveries by skilled attendants have increased by 15.3% (64.7% in 2010 and 80% in 2012. According to the Liberia Demography and Health Survey of 2007, eight in 10 mothers (79%) received prenatal care from a health professional (Doctor, Nurse, Midwife or Physician Assistant). In 2012 87% of the first ante-natal clinic (ANC) visits were attended by skilled personnel. Report on access to maternal health services amongst pregnant women in 2012 revealed 1st ANC visit at 87%. Fourth ANC visit in 2012 was 58% compared to 4th ANC visit in 2010 which was 40.9%.

Care given during the post-natal period is currently focused on the mother as compared to the past where emphasis was more on newborn care. Regardless of where the delivery occurs, the mother is expected to attend post-natal clinic (PNC) to be examined by trained health workers within 42 days to avoid post-partum complications. However, the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare reports a slight decline in PNC visits. 64,962 PNC visits were made in 2010 while 64,597 PNC visits were made in 2012. (MOH&SW Annual reports 2010 and 2012).

In rural Liberia trained traditional midwives are incentivized to refer pregnant women to health centers for deliveries. This is supported by Health care volunteers established in rural communities to assist with awareness and outreach programs on the prevention of home deliveries. These health volunteers are also trained to identify early symptoms of malaria and other diseases for referral to health centers.

ADOLESCENT HEALTH

Family planning, teenage pregnancy, drug and substance abuse are infused into the four career subjects of science, math, social studies, and biology in high schools throughout Liberia. Family planning services are available to students through referral to nearby clinics within the school community.

FAMILY PLANNING

Liberia reported a low contraceptive prevalence rate of 11% and large unmet needs (36%) for family planning (FP) services few years ago. (LDHS, 2007). In 2012, 96,755 new users (women of reproductive age 15-49 years) were provided FP services as compare to 65,812 in 2010 excluding those who opted for condoms.

STIS, HIV AND AIDS PREVALENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Though the overall HIV rate among women is higher (1.8%) than among men (1.2%), Ante Natal Care (ANC) sentinel surveillance prevalence has reduced from 4.0% in 2010 to 2.6% among pregnant women. All pregnant women attending first ANC visits are routinely offered test for syphilis and hepatitis B.

HIV services have been decentralized significantly to ensure access to prevention, care and treatment for the citizens. To reduce vertical transmission and preserve the health of pregnant women, Prevention of Mother-To-Child Transmission of HIV (PMTCT) services has been integrated into 336 health facilities providing ANC as compared to 18 facilities in 2009. Additionally, Anti-Retro Viral Therapy (ART) sites have been established around the country at 46 health care facilities. Since the inception of free ART services, cumulatively the number of females ≥ 15 in care and on ART (excluding pregnant women) enrolled in care amount to 55.3% (5090/8875) while pregnant women in the same category amounts to 434. (December 2012 NACP report). 37% of these women (482/1521) received Anti-Retro Viral prophylaxis to reduce the risk of mother to child transmission of HIV as compared to 32% in 2010.

NUTRITION DURING PREGNANCY AND LACTATION

In 2010, the MOHSW establish the Nutrition Unit to develop a comprehensive nutrition package for lactating mothers. Presently the unit caters also to women and children. Furthermore MOHSW has strengthened the capacity of 214 health workers and 483 community volunteers in six political sub-divisions in nutrition counseling using the 7 Essential Nutrition Actions (ENAs).

HEALTH AWARENESS

MOH&SW and partners through the national health division developed a national health promotion policy and the health communication strategy. One of the primary target audiences is women of reproductive age 14-49 years with tailored messages around women's health and advocacy on reduction of misconceptions and harmful traditional practices associated with women's health.

TRAINED WOMEN HEALTH PERSONNEL

About 470 students are being trained in health care delivery services in Liberia and abroad. Much more are needed to reduce the capacity gap in the health sector. Currently, there are 82 doctors, 308 physician assistants, 1,455 nurses, 645 midwives to care for a population of 3.489,072 million people. Health workers have been trained in specialized skills; 96 health workers trained in Basic Life Saving Skills (BLSS), 115 service providers capacity built in family planning provision, 120 health workers capacity strengthened in neonatal resuscitation, 50 health workers capacity enhanced in Home Based Maternal and Newborn care. Additionally, 54 health workers have been trained in the prevention of obstetric fistula, 198 service providers trained in PMTCT sites in six counties, 32 health workers trained as trainers in PMTCT, 120 CHVs in 2 counties and 10 Social Workers in 5 counties trained in fistula case identification, tracking of client and prompt referral for management, 54 health professionals from 5 counties trained in the prevention of fistula using foley catheter and pathograph.

PROVISION OF HEALTH INFRASTURCTURE

Health infrastructure is one of the major pillars of the National Health and Social Welfare Plan. Nationwide, health infrastructures increased by 20.7% between 2009-2010 leading to the reduction of one health facility serving the average population of 8,000 in 2006 to 5,500 in 2010. These figures have been steadily increasing throughout Liberia.

Table 1.5 Distribution of Health Facilities by County and Ownership below.

County	*GOL*	*Not for profit*	*Private for profit*	*Total*
Bomi	20	2	2	24
Bong	32	5	1	38
Gbarpolu	14			14
Grand Bassa	21	7	2	30
Grand Cape Mount	32	0	0	32
Grand Gedeh	17	1		18
Grand Kru	17	0	0	17
Lofa	53	3		56
Margibi	18	2	14	34
Maryland	20	4		24
Montserrado	47	34	75	156
Nimba	42	12	4	58
Rivercess	16	1		17
Sinoe	31	1		32
Grand Total	**396**	**73**	**98**	**567**

(Country Situational Analysis Report, 2011)

Table 1.6 Summary of health facility Type by Ownership

Owner	*Clinic*	*Health Center*	*Hospital*	*Total*
GOL	333	40	23	396
Not for profit	56	7	10	73
Private for profit	90	4	4	98
Grand Total	**479**	**51**	**37**	**567**

However in 2012 statistics showed a significant increase in the number of health facilities from 422 in 2010 to 656 in 2012.

GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

The clinical and psychosocial management of Gender Based Violence is one of the essential pillars inscribed in the national health policy and essential package of health services. Consequently, the national AIDs control program developed an indicator to report on the total number of survivors from penetrative rape receiving

post exposure prophylaxis in 72 hours. Further, county hospitals have established SGBV Units and trained health workers to respond to reported cases of rape. To deal with cases of SGBV, one hundred and seven three (173) health workers and 120 health care providers were trained in clinical management of rape. 90 GCHVs have been trained in the referral of SGBV cases, while 325 community members from 12 communities were trained to provide psychosocial services to SGBV survivors and do referrals to health facilities.

Mental Health and the Elderly

The elderly make up approximately 5% of the population of Liberia. Of this number, males constitute 49% or (83,761) and females, 51% or 87,180 persons. About 39% of the elderly live in temporary houses while a small number of 18% live in permanent dwelling. A high proportion of the elderly are disabled due to old age and have sight difficulties. Most of these people live in the rural areas with 58% in Bomi, 5% in Gbarpolu and 2% in Grand Gedeh. There is one government facility to care for the elderly, men and women but the facilities are inadequate to accommodate large numbers. A number of elderly are provided home care by immediate relatives consistent with tradition. It is considered demeaning, in Liberia as in most parts of Africa, to abandon elderly parents and relatives to foster care.

Mental health facilities in Liberia were damaged during the civil war. Though the Ministry of Health and social Welfare has a mental health section, there is only one small psychiatric facility located in Monrovia. It was established by German emergency doctors who operated it from 2003-2011 when their program phased out. The Government of Liberia took over the facility in 2011. This facility has a patient population of 56, 31 males and 25 females who receive treatment for schizophrenia, substance abuse, drug induced psychosis, depressive disorders and psycho-social trauma. Aware of the gap in mental health service delivery, the government is undertaking training of mental health nurses who, on completion of their training will be attached to county hospitals to provide the needed service.

Article 13: Economic and Social Rights

To increase women's access to finance, a number of schemes were introduced during the reporting period. These include building women's entrepreneurship program to increase women's livelihoods and create more and better jobs for them. Beneficiaries from this project were three hundred women's groups in rural and urban areas with a membership of 22,000.

Soft loans were also provided to women to expand their businesses. Loans were given to 3,000 women under the Colloquium loan fund in 2009. To ensure these loans were managed properly, a training center, Traditional Women for Peace Training Center was established to cater to the training needs of beneficiaries. Under the Sirleaf Market Women Fund project (SMWF) market facilities, wells and ware houses were constructed in various locations throughout Liberia. Women in this project also benefited from a literacy program which trained 500 illiterate women to read and write.

A national rural women's program under the aegis of the Ministry of Gender and Development increased the capacity of rural women through the provision of

farming implements, seeds, clerical supplies and training workshops. Storage facilities for their agricultural produce were also constructed in 12 counties.

A joint Food and nutrition program to mitigate the impact of domestic price increases, maintain food and improved nutrition for vulnerable homes was introduced by the government of Liberia and partners. The projected beneficiaries were mainly women who represent the majority of small holder producers in the agricultural sector. In 2010, 160 women from Bong, Nimba and Lofa Counties were trained under this program in post-harvest rice processing including, parboiling, drying and milling. Between 2009 and 2010, 12,000 women farmers received farming tools and assorted seeds to improve their production. An additional 30 women were trained in business marketing skills, resource mobilization, communication and group formation and leadership skills.

Article 14: Rural Women

The Government of Liberia through the Ministry of Gender in 2009 established Rural Women Structures for their involvement in all activities, political, social, cultural and economic affairs without limitation in the 15 counties of Liberia. This has increased rural women's awareness of their basic human and legal rights under the laws. While no impact assessment has been made of the awareness and advocacy undertaken, rural women's increased participation in local decision making is evidence of the impact of the advocacy.

Provision of basic social services in Liberia, such as electricity, pipe borne water and sanitation remain a serious challenge. The Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo Information Services, (LISGIS) publication in July 2011 puts Essential Assets Deficiency at 85%. The use of pipe borne water is low at 39% while there is also a high level of improper waste disposal, 87% of households do not have flush toilets for human waste disposal. Hand pumps and wells are current sources for clean drinking water in both urban and rural areas. Women and girls spend long hours fetching water for household use. 77% of all rural households and 30% of urban households lack systems for solid waste disposal. Poor drainage and garbage disposal systems often contaminate drinking water.

Monrovia has a solid waste disposal program which is basically operational and environmentally acceptable, but the rest of Liberia has no solid disposal services.

Electricity is generally generated by use of generators. Power sector investments planned under the AFT, include rehabilitation of the Mount Coffee Hydro-electric plant, addition of back-up heavy fuel oil generation capacity for the dry season, completion of the main transmission backbones and distribution facilities and connection with the West African Power Pool (WAPP). WAPP is An ECOWAS electrification project which was commissioned and electricity is now being distributed to leeward counties. Nimba County, Liberia's second most populated county, was the first to benefit from this project in July, 2013.

The government is also arranging the installation of solar lights in over 10,000 villages. Since most communities will remain off the grid in the immediate future, the government will support them in developing alternative options with small-scale thermal- hydro- and solar-energy. Currently, experiments with agriculture biomass for small diesel generators are being conducted. As success emerges from such

pilots, the government will support their replication (AFT, 2012). A pilot project to provide electricity to rural women using solar technology is being implemented in Todee, Montserrado County. Rural women have been trained in the technology which they operate and maintain.

As a result of the rural women structures, rural women are now involved in politics and socio-economic activities. During the 2011 general elections, rural women mobilized and provided qualified candidates to contest election, some of whom won legislative elections. Additionally, through this structure, these women galvanized efforts to obtain microfinance loans and acquired other basic skills to improve their livelihoods.

Rural women were also educated on Inheritance Law and their human and basic rights. This reduces their inferiority complex and allows them to express themselves freely. These laws changed the dual legal systems for women in urban and rural areas. These structures are working in all 15 counties and are monitored by the Ministry of Gender and Development. Additionally, a strong network of rural women organizations at the local and county levels reinforces the structures. Now all women irrespective of their status can benefit equally from the laws.

The characteristics of poverty shows that people living in the rural areas are at the extreme end of poverty. The government is remedying the situation by increasing the development of social services. Liberia is piloting a Social Cash Transfer program (SCT) in Bomi County to provide cash to households that are labor constrained and below the poverty line. It is currently donor funded and administered by UNICEF under the Ministry of Gender and Development. Following a major evaluation, the Government will consider mechanisms to scale up this scheme and others, such as micro-credits and public works to assist the most vulnerable households improve their livelihood and graduate from extreme poverty. Meanwhile, additional funding has now been obtained to extend the program to Maryland and Grand Kru Counties. So far, 1900 households received transfers which benefit 7123 persons.

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Article 15: Equality before the Law

This section has been dealt with in previous articles relative to constitutional provisions of equality for all citizens before the law irrespective of gender.

Article 16: Marriage and the Family

All conflicting Customary and Statutory Laws discriminating against women within the Republic of Liberia were amended by March 21, 2009. These include the Act to govern the devolution of estates and established rights of inheritance for spouses of both statutory and customary marriages. Traditional courts' procedures are now in conformity with human rights norms and standards to guarantee women's equal access with men to courts of competent jurisdictions. Traditional leaders have been educated and are retooled on issues of statutory human rights laws of Liberia and women are now allowed to own property.

So far there are no recorded cases of marriage and the family since the amendment; however, the recent ethnic problem between the Mandingoes and Lormas in Lofa County Liberia utilized human rights norms to render judgment.

Widow's Dower Rights

The Government of Liberia took steps to harmonize statutory and customary marriages. An act to Govern the Devolution of Estates and establish rights of Inheritance for spouses of both statutory and customary marriages approved on October 7, 2003 provides in Chapter 2, on the Rights, Duties and liabilities of Customary Marriage section 2.1 that "all customary marriages shall be legal within this Republic, and the rights, duties and liabilities of the statutory wife shall likewise be accorded to all customary wives, consistent with and pursuant to the provisions contained in the Act adopting 'a New Domestic Relations Law known as title 9 of the Liberian Code of Laws revised 1973, and which is hereby fully incorporated as if quoted verbatim". The Act defines a customary marriage as a marriage between a man and a woman performed according to the tribal tradition of their locality.

The law states in Chapter 3, Section 3.2 "Upon the husband's death the widow or multiple widows shall be entitled to only one-third (1/3) of their late husband's property, the balance two thirds (2/3) of the deceased property shall descent to his children, if any, or to his collateral heir according to the Decedents Estates Law".

Widow's liberty not limited or restricted after Husband's Death

In this section of the law, after the death or burial of her/their husband, the customary widow or multiple widows shall be at liberty either to remain on the premises of her/their late husband to administer said estate, or she/they may take another husband of her/their choice and shall vacate the premises of her/their late husband in as much the new marriage entered automatically reverse said rights and same property return to the heirs or children of the late husband.

The Inheritance Law

The Inheritance Law abolishes all forms of discrimination against women and removes legal disparities which existed between urban and rural women. It also gives all women rights to the following: land ownership, marriage by consent, access to health care, information, education and reproductive health rights. These rights also include the number of children to have, guardianship of child, trusteeship, adoption of children and equal rights as husband and wife inclusive of the rights to acquisition, management, administration, enjoyment and disposition of properties.

Wife's Property Rights

This provides for all wives irrespective of urban or rural status to acquire and own property exclusive of their husbands, irrespective of whether the property was acquired before or during marriage. It provides women the freedom to conduct lawful business in their own names including the right to contract with third parties with the full knowledge and consent of their husbands.

Marriage by Consent

It is unlawful in Liberia for parents to choose husbands for their daughters. Every customary female of legal age shall have their unrestricted right to marry the man of their choice. It shall be unlawful for any tribal parent to choose a husband for his/her daughter, or compel the daughter or other female relative to marry a man against her will. Any parent who violates this act commits a felony of the first degree, punishable by a fine of not less than $500 Liberian Dollars or not more than $1,000LD on conviction.

However, customary and religious practices in some parts of Liberia support early marriages for girls in their teens. Rationale for this includes the prevention of teenage pregnancies and necessity for preserving and protecting the girl child from wanton sexual abuse. Additional public awareness, particularly on the anti-rape and new women's laws, supported by a strong monitoring and prosecutorial system is required for reduction in this practice.

IV. CONCLUSION

168. The Government of Liberia has taken firm measures to adhere to principles enshrined in the articles of the CEDAW Convention since the last report. While some improvements have been made in areas of policy formulation, programs and interventions to reverse inequities, we recognize that there are some actions to be taken to improve issues related to culture, tradition and social services. The Government of Liberia remains committed to the removal of all forms of gender disparities.

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